



CONGRESSMAN JOHN P. MURTHA

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MURTHA'S CORNER

DECEMBER 2009

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HEALTH CARE REFORM ADVANCES FORWARD

Last month, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 220-215 to pass the Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3962.

"Health care costs are out of control and hurting our families, seniors, small businesses, and those with pre-existing conditions," said Congressman Murtha. "We have the best health care in the world if you can afford it, but every year more and more Americans cannot."

Today, there are approximately 46 million Americans without health insurance, including an estimated 32,000 in Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District alone.

Each year, the United States spends \$2.5 trillion on health care costs, 50 percent more per person than any other country in the world. By 2018 it is projected that this figure will rise to \$4.4 trillion, present-

ing significant challenges to individuals, employers, and federal, state, and local budgets.

For the 12th Congressional District in Pennsylvania, the Affordable Health Care for America Act will close the Medicare prescription drug donut hole for 16,100 seniors, provide tax credits for up to 12,800 small businesses, expand coverage to the 32,000 uninsured, and allow thou-

APPROPRIATIONS BILLS FUND LOCAL PROJECTS

Congress has completed its work on the annual appropriations bills, which provide funding for federal agencies and programs in fiscal year 2010.

"Each year I'm proud to secure funding for worthy projects and programs that benefit our community and improve the quality-of-life in our region," said Murtha.

The FY10 Appropriations bills include the following funding, secured by Murtha, for local projects and programs:

- \$6,900,000 for the Army Corps of Engineers Section 313 program to design and construct wastewater treatment, water supply, and water resource protection

projects in Allegheny, Armstrong, Cambria, Greene, Fayette, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland Counties.

- \$200,000 for Natural Biodiversity, Cambria County, to restore stream-bank habitat and improve water quality in the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin and adjacent areas.

- \$900,000 to construct an Emergency Operations Center at the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Latrobe to meet statutory mandates for an alternate location at both the local and county level.

- \$800,000 for the Lower Burrell Municipal Authority Wildlife Lodge Road sanitary sewer extension project, which will install approxi-

mately 28,000 feet of sanitary sewer pipe to provide public wastewater disposal to 100 residents.

- \$372,000 for the Penn State University Enhanced Dairy Farm Profitability Program to study issues and problems that affect and reduce the profitability of our nation's dairy farmers.

- \$1,000,000 for Fayette County to replace its outdated emergency responder communications equipment with a state-of-the-art mobile data infrastructure system.

- \$400,000 to provide key pieces of diagnostic radiologic equipment to the Mon Valley Hospital.

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Affordable Health Care for America Act

(House Passed Legislation)

Coverage and Choice: The bill protects current coverage—allowing individuals to keep the insurance they have if they like it—and preserves choice of doctors, hospitals, and health plans.

- **Immediate reforms.** Creates a new national program to provide affordable coverage for those who can't get health insurance today because of pre-existing conditions; allows young adults to remain on their parents' policies through the age of 26; protects treatment for children with deformities.
- **Health Insurance Exchange.** Creates a transparent and functional marketplace (starting in 2013) for individuals and small employers to comparison shop among private and public insurers, including new health insurance co-ops.
- **A Public Health Insurance Option.** One of the many choices within the Health Insurance Exchange is a public health insurance option to provide a new choice in many areas of our country dominated by just one or two private insurers.

Affordability:

- **Provides Sliding Scale Affordability Credits.** Available to low-and moderate-income individuals and families to make insurance premiums affordable and reduce the cost-sharing to levels that ensure access to care.
- **Caps Annual Out-of-Pocket Spending.** Caps annual out-of-pocket spending at a maximum of \$5,000 per individual and \$10,000 per family to prevent bankruptcies from medical expenses.
- **Increased Competition.** The creation of the Health Insurance Exchange and the inclusion of a public health insurance option will make health insurance more affordable by increasing competition, spurring efficiency and transparency.
- **Improves Medicare.** Senior citizens and people with disabilities will benefit from provisions that fill the donut hole in the Part D drug program, eliminate cost-sharing for preventive services, and increase access to primary care providers.

Controlling Costs: The bill reduces the federal deficit and will reduce the growth in health care spending in numerous ways. Specifically, it invests in health care through stronger prevention and wellness measures; increases access to primary care; implements health care delivery system reforms; creates a Health Insurance Exchange and a new Public Health Insurance Option; improves Medicare payment accuracy and makes additional reforms to Medicare and Medicaid—all of which will help slow the growth of health care costs over time. These savings will be passed on to families, employers, and taxpayers.

HEALTH CARE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sands of others who for years have been denied health insurance due to pre-existing conditions, access to affordable coverage.

"For nearly a century, both Democrats and Republicans have failed to enact comprehensive health care reform," added Murtha. "This historic vote

moves us closer to solving America's health care crisis."

As of press time, the Senate has not yet passed a health care bill. When it does, House and Senate negotiators will meet and agree on a final bill which must pass both chambers again before going to the President's desk.

PROJECTS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- \$125,000 for the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland County to assist local businesses with identifying government bids, contract awards, and foreign business opportunities.
- \$350,000 for Indiana Regional Medical Center's Electronic Medical Record Initiative.
- \$550,000 for the United Mine Workers of America to provide miners with basic and advanced training to enhance job and safety skills.
- \$300,000 to assist Highlands Hospital with a much needed expansion of their emergency department.
- \$393,000 to the Tri-County Joint Municipal Authority in Fredrickstown for improvements and upgrades to their existing water treatment facility.
- \$650,000 to upgrade the public safety radio communications network in Indiana County. The current network is insufficient to meet the county's fire, police, EMS, dispatch and paging needs.
- \$150,000 for Excelsior Health, Frick Hospital to develop a breast care center that includes digital mammography and ultrasound imaging.
- \$350,000 for the Center for Global Competitiveness at Saint Francis University and Saint Vincent College to assist small businesses in exploring new and expanded international and domestic marketing opportunities.
- \$200,000 for the Johnstown Area Regional Industries (JARI) Workforce Development program to offer increased training opportunities for new hires, incumbent, and displaced workers.
- \$125,000 for the Progress Fund, a community development financial institution that creates jobs and improves communities by providing entrepreneurial support and capital.
- \$625,000 to make significant safety and aesthetic enhancements to the City of Washington's East Chestnut Street Garage and Intermodal Transit Center.

DID YOU KNOW...MURTHA'S SUPPORT OF CANCER RESEARCH

In 1992, Congress created the *Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)* within the Department of Defense to manage funding for the research of diseases and illnesses prevalent in the military and throughout our society.

What developed over the past 17 years has been a unique partnership between Congress, the military and the public, in which doctors, scientists, and health advocates collaborate on innovative ideas and high-impact research.

Each year Congress develops the federal budget; included in that budget are monies specifically designated for the programs at the CDMRP. These monies are not requested by the President nor by the Department of Defense. Rather, they are added by Congress to the annual Defense Appropriations bill and managed by the U.S. Army.

The first program funded through the CDMRP was the breast cancer peer-reviewed research program. In the early 1990s, a group of military spouses came to Congressman Murtha and told him that the military health care system was paying no attention to the disease. At the time, even mammograms weren't being offered at many of our military hospitals. As the Chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Murtha put \$25 million into the Pentagon budget for breast can-

cer research that year.

One out of every eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, and when the Secretary of Defense called to ask what he should do with this money, Murtha's response was simple, "Offer mammograms."

This initial funding was so successful that the following year Murtha put \$210 million into the program, and since that time, Congress has earmarked nearly \$2.4 billion for the Department of Defense peer-reviewed breast cancer research program.

These funds have enabled over 5,500 proposals from scientists and doctors across the nation to receive funding for innovative projects that have made a significant impact on our detection and treatment of the disease.

In 1997, Congress expanded the CDMRP research program to include other types of cancers, including prostate and ovarian.

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men, and this year alone, approximately 192,000 men in the United States will be diagnosed with the disease. Since 1997, Congress has earmarked \$970 million for the Department of Defense peer-reviewed prostate cancer research program, resulting in the awarding of over 2,000 research proposals.

Ovarian cancer is the leading cause of death among gynecological can-

cers, and this year alone, approximately 21,500 women in the United States will be diagnosed with the disease. Since 1997, Congress has earmarked \$141 million for the Department of Defense peer-reviewed ovarian cancer research program, funding approximately 200 research proposals.

In 2002, Congress expanded the CDMRP research program to include Chronic Myelogenous Leu-

kemia (CML), a cancer of the white blood cells that will affect approximately 5,000 Americans this year. Since 2002, Congress has appropriated \$22 million for 61 CML research proposals.

"The CDMRP peer-reviewed cancer research programs have become a national model for disease research, and I'm proud to include this funding in the Defense Appropriations bill every year," said Murtha.

Recent Legislation Passed by Congress:

Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act

This legislation, signed into law by President Obama on November 6, 2009, extends unemployment benefits by 14 weeks nationwide and an extra 6 weeks in states suffering the highest jobless rates. It helps small businesses by extending a provision that allows small businesses to count their losses against taxes they paid in previous years. The bill also extends the \$8,000 first time home buyer credit to April 30, 2010 and allows a \$6,500 credit for existing homeowners who buy a replacement principal residence.

Veterans Health Care Budget Reform & Transparency Act

Signed into law by President Obama on October 22, 2009, this legislation authorizes Congress to approve investments in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care one year in advance, thus ensuring reliable and timely funding to support the delivery of high quality medical care for our nation's veterans. This legislation was hailed by veterans' organizations as "an historic legislative victory on behalf of all veterans."

Medicare Premium Fairness Act

This legislation protects 11 million seniors from unfair increases in their 2010 Medicare Part B premiums. Under current law, for nearly three-quarters of Medicare enrollees, their Medicare Part B premium cannot increase more than the cost of living adjustment for Social Security. There will not be a Social Security COLA next year because there was not any inflation, and without Congressional action, the other quarter of enrollees will see their Part B premiums increase from \$96 per month to \$110-120 per month. This legislation, which the House passed on September 24, 2009, holds the 2010 Part B premiums at \$96.40 for these enrollees.

UPDATE FROM AFGHANISTAN

Over Thanksgiving Congressman Murtha led a bipartisan Congressional fact-finding delegation to meet with U.S. and NATO officials in Afghanistan.

While visiting Afghanistan, the delegation met with U.S. military leaders, including General Stanley McChrystal, to discuss the security situation on the ground, the strategy behind the request for additional troops, and the status of recruiting and training the Afghan Army and police forces.

The Congressional Delegation also met with officials from the U.S. State Department to discuss the progress and shortcomings of the Karzai Government, as well as civilian construction and reconstruction efforts.

Murtha has warned that he sees "no achievable goal" in Afghanistan, and

makes frequent comparisons to the Vietnam War where additional troops never solved the problem. He is also concerned about the growing costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have now cost nearly \$1.1 trillion, at a time of escalating deficits and debt. Last month, Murtha joined with other senior Democratic lawmakers in introducing a war surtax bill to pay for today's wars so that our children and grandchildren are not stuck with the bill.

Earlier this month, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, chaired by Murtha, held a briefing with CIA Director Leon Panetta to discuss the threat Afghanistan poses to U.S. national security. The Committee will have additional hearings to review the strategy and funding means.



Congressman Murtha, center, listens as General Stanley McChrystal, provides an update on U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan.

STIMULUS FUNDS AT WORK

In February, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to jumpstart our struggling economy, to put Americans back to work, and to invest in our nation's aging infrastructure. Already, a number of area projects have been funded through stimulus dollars:

- \$900,000 to make road and infrastructure improvements to serve the Fayette Business Park.
- \$322,575 to expand Head Start Programs in Fayette County.
- \$460,764 to expand Early Head Start Programs in Cambria and Westmoreland Counties.

GROUND BROKEN FOR FLIGHT 93 NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Ground was broken on November 7, 2009 for the Flight 93 National Memorial in Stonycreek Township, Somerset County.

In March 2002, Congressman Murtha introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to establish a National Memorial, which was later signed into law by President Bush. Since that time, Murtha has been instrumental in securing nearly \$19 million

in federal funding for the Memorial's land acquisition, construction, and other improvements and expenses associated with the site.

Murtha was unable to attend the groundbreaking ceremony because the House was in session that day, but he submitted text in the Congressional Record marking the ceremony. The following are excerpts from that text:

"It wasn't until later that

morning (September 11, 2001) that I had learned of another plane crashing into the quiet fields of Somerset County within my congressional district. There was little known about that flight, so the following morning, September 12th, I drove back to Pennsylvania and to Stonycreek Township...

I was quoted as saying, 'Somebody here was a hero, a passenger . . . or the pilot who would not fly

on. There must have been a struggle. Some heroic individual brought this plane down.'

I was right about a struggle, but I was wrong in saying 'some heroic individual brought this plane down.' In fact, there were forty heroic individuals aboard United Airlines Flight 93 that morning. Forty ordinary citizens, who together, decided to make an extraordinary sacrifice."

The Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives has 446 seats. These seats are unassigned, and Members can sit wherever they like, except for the last Democratic seat, in the last row. For over three decades, that seat has been occupied by Cong. Murtha, and he is surrounded by members of the PA Delegation and our friends from neighboring states. Numerous stories have been written about Murtha's Corner, and this newsletter is appropriately titled as such.